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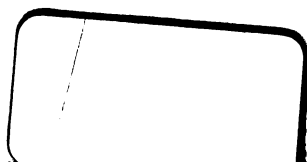
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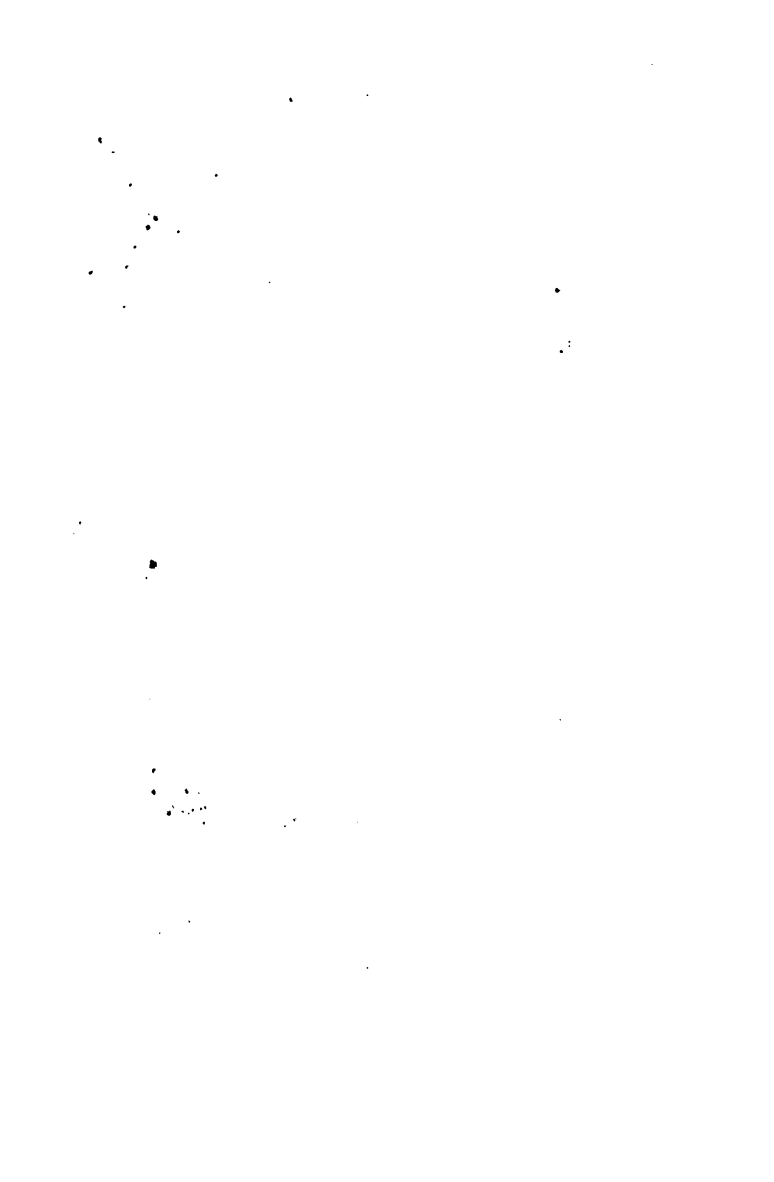
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An Easy Handbook
TO THE
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

BY
MRS. F. J. MITCHELL.

LONDON:
HATCHARD & CO. 187 PICCADILLY,
Booksellers to H.R.H. the Princess of Wales.

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TO
SISTER ELIZABETH

This Little Work

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



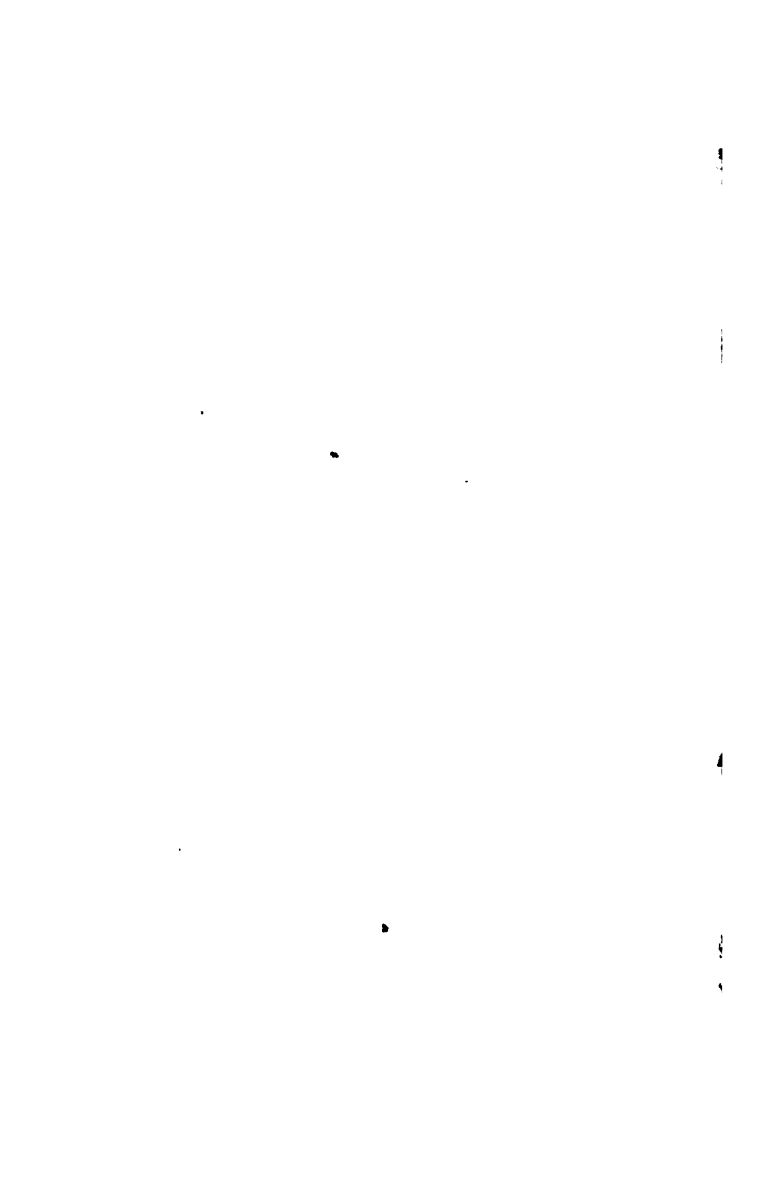
PREFACE.

THE "Handbook to St. Luke" was to have been followed by a Handbook to each of the other three Evangelists; but it is thought better first to publish an easy guide to the Acts of the Apostles, in order to complete the series of notes on the writings of St. Luke, as his Gospel and the Book of Acts form together a complete history of the foundation of the Church—a history beginning earlier, and closing later, than that of any other Evangelist.



THE WAY TO USE THIS BOOK.

This Book is not to be read straight through like a story, and it is not intended to be of any use without the Bible. You must read a Chapter in the Acts of the Apostles, and then one of these Chapters ; but you will not understand this Book if you read it by itself.



THE

Acts of the Apostles.

CHAP. I.

THE Book of the Acts of the Apostles is one of the most interesting in the Bible ; for it tells us what became of the Christian Church after our Lord had taken His visible presence from it. It gives us an account of many of the doings of the Apostles, St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. James ; and being written to a Gentile, it speaks fully of the life and labours of St. Paul, who was the Apostle of the Gentiles. It was written by Luke, the beloved Physician, who wrote the third Gospel, and was addressed to Theophilus, the same Greek to whom his Gospel was written :—" The former treatise " he writes of, of course means that Gospel.

He tells us what our Lord's employment was during the forty days between His Resurrection and Ascension. He was speaking to his disci-

ples of the things belonging to the Kingdom of God. Perhaps instructing them as to the future government of the Church; perhaps telling them of the glories of the world to come. We have no minute account of those days:—wonderful and awful days they must have been; and happy days also, for the disciples now knew in Whom they believed.

They were “assembled together,” or, as some translate it, “were eating together.” Jesus had no need now of a common meal. Perhaps he was repeating the last act before His crucifixion, and feeding them with His Body and Blood. He commanded them that they should *wait* for the Promise of the Father, namely, the Holy Ghost. They were not to begin to preach directly, but to wait until they were sent by God. They do not seem to have been able to get rid of the idea that the kingdom of Christ was to be an earthly one. When He left them, it is not said that He went away from them, but that He was *taken* up:—“A cloud received Him out of their sight;” in a cloud He will come again to judge the world.

The two men in white apparel were two angels. They told the Apostles that our Lord shall come in like manner as He went.

A “Sabbath-day’s journey” was about a mile.

The “upper room” into which they went is supposed to have been the same upper room, or

guest-chamber, where the Last Supper was eaten. Here the eleven Apostles waited until the Holy Ghost was given them. The mother of our Lord is here mentioned for the last time. The Church in those days only numbered one hundred and twenty, the grain of mustard-seed destined to become a great tree. Christ's brethren are named amongst them :—the word brethren was often used for cousins. The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake concerning Judas, in the ninth verse of the 41st Psalm ; also in the 109th Psalm. " This man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity."—That is to say, a field was purchased with the reward of his iniquity ; for we read in St. Matthew, that the priests bought the field.

You will remember that this reward was the thirty pieces of silver ; about 3*l*. of our money.

The twenty-first verse shows us that the Apostle Matthias was one of the earliest disciples of our Lord ; one of the seventy, he is generally supposed to have been. Little is known of him afterwards ; but he is said to have been murdered in Africa. Choosing by lot was a very common custom in those times. It was done by throwing slips of parchment into an urn.

CHAP. II.

PENTECOST was the second great feast kept by the Jews. It was a thanksgiving for the harvest; and the harvest began directly after the Passover. The feast of Pentecost was kept on the fiftieth day after the first day of unleavened bread. The "one place" in which the disciples were with one accord, is thought by some to be the "upper room" where the last Passover was eaten; and, by others, one of the thirty halls or rooms near the Temple. The "cloven tongues," though many, are mentioned in the third verse as "it," because the gift was *one* alike to all. All were filled with the Holy Ghost, women as well as men. Jews of many languages had come to Jerusalem to keep this feast. It is still kept by Christians under the name of Whitsuntide. The Jews wondered to hear the disciples speak in many tongues, because most of them were unlearned and ignorant men. "Proselytes," spoken of in the tenth verse, means converts. The words translated "new wine," mean "sweet wine." "The third hour of the day," means nine o'clock, and was the hour of the morning sacrifice. It was not the custom among the Jews to eat and drink until after this; and so St. Peter proves it impossible that they could have been drunken. The prophecy of Joel

is in the twenty-eighth verse of his second chapter. The eleven "stood up" with Peter to show that they agreed to what he said. "In the last days," means, in the days of the Messiah. St. Peter shows to the Jews how David spoke of Christ in the Psalms. "Hell," in the twenty-seventh verse, is "Hades," or the place of departed spirits. "The Holy One," of course, means Jesus. David says, that His flesh shall rest in hope, because Jesus Christ shall not see corruption. This shows that the belief in the Lord's Resurrection is the Christian's true strength. *We* shall rise again because *He* rose again.

The Apostles were all witnesses of this resurrection. They saw Jesus buried, and they saw Him risen again.

"He hath sent forth this:" He hath sent the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; "proceeding from the Father and the Son," as the Nicene Creed says. "Christ," means "anointed." This word shows us his Kingship;—for when kings and queens are crowned, it has been the custom from very ancient times to anoint them with sacred oil; and "the Lord's anointed" is a term applied to sovereigns.

Peter's answer to the repenting Jews clearly shows that baptism is no mere outward ceremony, but that it is for the "remission" or loosing

of sins. The Christian form of baptizing is "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" but Peter mentions a part for the whole: he particularly names Jesus Christ, because the confession that Jesus is the Christ was the great stumbling-block of the Jews. "All that are afar off," means the Gentiles. The believers were to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; not the extraordinary, but the ordinary gifts,—those which we ourselves and all baptized Christians have received.

This first sermon from an Apostle added to the Church three thousand souls; and herein was fulfilled the promise made by our Lord to St. Peter. In the forty-second verse we are given the signs of a true Church:—1. Continuing in the Apostles' "doctrine:" no differences of faith, no divers opinions. 2. Continuing in the Apostles' "fellowship:" no divisions into different sects, no breaking off from the Church. 3. "And in breaking of bread:" the Holy Eucharist, the chief service of Christians. 4. "And in prayers," all praying together; and where all could join in prayer must there not have been some form, some settled mode of proceeding? Indeed the Greek word means *the* Prayers, the liturgical form already drawn up and in use, whatever it was. Observe, that though the Christians had

their own services, they did not break away from the temple worship.* From "house to house," may be rendered "at home," or "in the house." The words, "breaking of bread," are generally used to signify the Holy Communion. "Such as should be saved," should be rendered, "Such as were entering on the way of salvation."

CHAP. III.

THE "ninth hour" is three o'clock in the afternoon, and was the hour of the evening sacrifice. The Apostles did not separate themselves from the Jewish worship, though they were followers of Christ. The lame man had been placed at the gate of the Temple, because those who were going to worship were supposed to be in a merciful frame of mind, and therefore inclined to give alms. The poor man had lain at the gate every day for a long time, and now a better blessing was to be given to him than he had ever hoped for.

* This shows the close connexion between the old dispensation and the new, between the Law and the Gospel. The magnificent temple worship was in a few years to pass away, and the Christian Church to grow more and more glorious; but while God allowed the Temple to stand, and the temple worship to be carried on, the faithful few in the "upper room" were true and steadfast to that worship.

Peter healed him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the despised name. The Christians were called Nazarenes in contempt. The first thing the lame man did was to enter into the Temple, praising God. Thus should all temporal and all spiritual blessings be acknowledged by us. The lame man held Peter and John, after the service was over and they were departing, for he could not bear to lose those who had given him so great a blessing; and as he kept them the people ran to them, and Peter preached his second sermon, which added five thousand more to the Church. He reproached the Jews with their crucifixion of their Lord, and for their preferring Barabbas the murderer; and told them they had killed the Prince, or Author, of Life: but God had raised Him up again, and by His name the lame man was healed. He warned them to repent, that they might be forgiven, before our Lord shall come to restore all things. And then he reminds them how all the prophets, from first to last, had spoken of the coming Saviour, and showed them that in the birth of Christ the covenant made with Abraham had been fulfilled. The Saviour was sent *first* to the Jews. St. Peter did not know, when he stopped to look at the poor lame man, that he would be the cause of the conversion of five thousand. This is a lesson to us always to do the duty nearest to us; had

Peter passed on and not noticed the poor man, he would probably not have had the chance of converting so many souls to God that day. A little duty fulfilled is sure to bring a greater duty in its train, and often many blessings.

CHAP. IV.

THE captain of the Temple, or the ruler of the Temple, was the chief of the guard of the Levites appointed to watch over the safety of the Temple. The Sadducees are particularly spoken of, as "coming upon" them because they denied the resurrection of the dead altogether; and, of course, would be angry with any one who taught it. The number of converts seems to have been five thousand, besides women and children. The court before which the Apostles were examined next day was the court of the Sanhedrim, the highest court of the Jews. It had seventy members, and the high priest was always the president.

It was a law amongst the Jews that all miracles were to be done in the name of the Lord. They, therefore, asked Peter and John *by what name* they had done this miracle, in order to make them condemn themselves; for if they said, "in the name of Jesus," that would be acknowledging Jesus to be the Lord; and thereby they

would be found guilty of blasphemy. But Peter was no more the timid follower who denied his Lord in a moment of fear. His glorious confession, most precious to all Christians, has no uncertain sound. It must have been a noble satisfaction thus to atone for his former weak denial. Before the Holy Ghost came down, St. Peter denied his Lord before a servant-maid : after the Holy Ghost came down, he confessed Him boldly before the great council of the Jews. Does not this show the difference between nature and grace ?

“Unlearned and ignorant men,” means that they were unlettered and private persons—not called to any office amongst the Jews.

The name of Jesus was what the rulers dreaded. Could they put a stop to that, the doctrine of Christ could no more be taught. Peter and John refused to obey their commandment, which was against God's law ; and then, returning to their own company, they sought refuge in prayer,—the best help of a Christian. Their prayer was heard, and a further gift of the Holy Ghost answered it.

“Having all things in common” was a great help to the disciples in that time of trouble and persecution, for it relieved them from the burden of earthly cares ; and the knowledge that those belonging to them would be taken care of, of

course made them more willing to endure death and suffering. A common fund, also, could not be laid hold of so easily by the persecutors, as private property belonging to individuals.

Barnabas means "the Son of Consolation," or "exhortation." In the early times of the Jews the Levites were not allowed to hold land; but, from some passages in Jeremiah, it appears that this was lawful in later times. The character of St. Barnabas was very beautiful. He was, most likely, one of the seventy disciples. He was stoned, after years of faithful service in the cause of Christ, by some Jews in his native island, Cyprus.

CHAP. V.

ANANIAS and Sapphira were not obliged to sell their land, but having sold it, it was their duty to tell the truth about it. The lie was the sin, not the keeping back of part of the land. They wished to get the credit of having sold all, when they had only sold a part. The "young men" here mentioned were most likely servants of the Church. Amongst the Jews, people were called "young men" up to forty years of age. After the death of Ananias, Peter gave Sapphira a chance of acknowledging the truth, but she re-

peated her husband's falsehood, and was struck dead in like manner. It was often the custom amongst the Jews to bury the dead the same day they died.

The hypocrisy of professing members brings more shame and trouble upon the Church than all the assaults of her open enemies; and the death of these two persons was a fearful warning to the Christian congregation. In Solomon's Porch the Apostles healed and did wonders, in the very same place where the priests and Levites and captain of the guard had "come upon them" a little time before; and this again roused the anger of the chief men of Jerusalem. Again they were seized, and again they were put in prison. Gamaliel, who gave his advice after their wonderful deliverance from prison, that they should be let alone, was one of their most learned men—a lawyer, or scribe, and the tutor of St. Paul.

He, believing in a resurrection, and being a Pharisee, was likely to be more lenient towards the Apostles than the unbelieving Sadducees were. The "Judas of Galilee" mentioned by him tried to get up a rebellion in the days of the taxing made by Cyrenius, about eleven years after the birth of our Lord.

He tells them, that as the false prophets had been overthrown when they tried to make the

people follow them, God would surely overthrow the doctrine of the Apostles should it be false ; but if it should be true, no power on earth could hinder it from spreading. The Apostles were beaten before they were set at liberty. We may suppose they received the " forty stripes save one," ordered by the Jewish law. They were not afraid of again teaching in the Temple. In " every house," is better translated, " in the house," or " at home ;" for they had some settled place of assembling,—generally supposed to have been the upper room in which the Last Supper was eaten.

CHAP. VI.

THE Grecians and the Hebrews mentioned in the first verse of this chapter were Jews, but the Grecians were foreign Jews ; that is to say, Jews who lived out of Palestine, and used the Greek language. You will remember that the accusation over our Lord's head, when He was crucified, was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin. These were the three languages most used in the world at that time. Hebrew was the holy and ancient language of the Jews, and in it the law and the prophets, and indeed the whole of the Old Testament, was written : Greek

was the language of the most polished nation in the world—Greece, and was much used by travellers and merchants; and a great deal of the New Testament was written in it. Latin was the language of the Romans, who had conquered nearly all the world.

“The widows” were supported (when they had no children who could take care of them) out of the Church funds. To prevent young widows, and those who were likely to marry again, coming into the number, St. Paul directed that no one should be received who was under sixty years old, or who had not led a holy and charitable life. The Apostles found they had enough to do without looking after the bodily wants of their hearers, so they told the people to choose seven of their number to take charge of the almsgiving.

The Apostles told the people to choose them, but they kept to themselves the power of appointing them to the office. “Look ye out seven men whom *we* may appoint over this business.” And then they prayed and laid their hands on them; whence we see that the ordination of Deacons is scriptural.

Stephen and Philip are the only persons out of this number whose history afterwards we know anything about. Stephen was the first martyr for the name of Christ, and his name means “a

crown." At first, the Christians were so particular about keeping to the first number of seven deacons, that each church, however large, had only seven. For instance, two hundred years after the time we are reading of, the city of Rome had forty priests, but only seven deacons.

The synagogue of the Libertines was the synagogue of the "freedmen"—people who had been slaves and were liberated, or the children of those who had been slaves,—most likely taken to Rome by the Romans, and afterwards allowed to return. These men brought the same accusation against Stephen that had formerly been brought against Christ. "False witness" seems to have been a very common crime amongst the Hebrews, from the time of Naboth downwards.

CHAP. VII.

THE high priest's question, "Are these things so?" gave Stephen leave to speak in his defence. Boldly before the Sanhedrim, the great Council of the Jews, does he remind them of all their wanderings from God; and going through their whole history shortly, he points out how they, the favoured nation, continually resisted God's will. "Charran," in the second verse, is of course the same place as Haran. The Hebrews were

evil entreated 430 years, but St. Stephen speaks in round numbers. "This place," in the seventh verse, is Jerusalem.

Joseph's brethren, out of envy, sold him into Egypt: Joseph was a type of Christ, who was refused by his own nation and sold by his friend.

St. Stephen says Jacob's kindred were seventy-five souls; the Book of Genesis says seventy. Stephen probably counts the five sons of Ephraim and Manasseh, who make up the number.

Moses is spoken of as being "exceeding fair," or "fair to God," which seems to show that he had spiritual as well as bodily graces and beauty. The education of the Egyptian Court, and the love bestowed on him for forty years, could not make him forget his own people. He knew he should be their deliverer; and, knowing this, he had to wait another forty years before he was allowed to begin his work. It has always been supposed that the Second Person of the Trinity, the blessed Jesus himself, appeared to him in the burning bush. "Putting off the shoes" was a token of respect, the same as putting off the hat in this country. St. Stephen dwells particularly on the ingratitude and unbelief of the Israelites in rejecting Moses, because it exactly foreshadowed their conduct to Christ. The saying of Moses about Christ is in the fifteenth verse of the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy. The

sin of the Israelites was that *in their hearts* they turned back into Egypt. Their hearts were not right with God. God says to all of us,—“Give me thine heart.” The calf the Israelites made was copied from the idols of Egypt. (The Egyptians worshipped animals, and one of their gods was a calf called Apis.) After this, God gave them up to worship the host of heaven, that is the sun, moon, and stars. Moloch is supposed to be the same as Baal, sometimes called the sun-god, sometimes the fire-god, to whom human sacrifices were offered up. It is not known what idol is meant by Remphan. Jesus is the same name as Joshua. Joshua brought the tabernacle into the land of the Gentiles; David desired to build a house for it; Solomon *did so*. St. Stephen seems to have been heard patiently until he, as the Jews thought, began to speak slightingly of the Temple they thought so much of. After the words, “Hath not my hand made all these things?” there was most likely a tumult amongst the people, for he changes his tone and bitterly reproaches them. He told them they had received the Law by the disposition of angels (it is a Jewish tradition that angels brought the tables of stone to Moses), but had not kept it. They had murdered the prophets, and at last had murdered the Saviour. They knew all this to be

true, and their rage showed itself in violence. Stephen saw Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God, as if in readiness to receive the faithful servant about to die for Him.

They cast him out of the city, for they might not stone him within the walls. It is uncertain whether he was put to death by sentence of the council or by the fury of the people; at any rate, the council made no effort to save him. The "witnesses" had always to cast the first stone: they took off their outer garments for this purpose.

The young man who took care of them was afterwards the holy apostle, St. Paul. Any man in the prime of life was called a young man by the Jews, so Saul need not have been a youth at this time.

Stephen bore witness to the Godhead of our Lord when he called upon Him to receive his spirit. His last prayer was that of the Saviour,—"Father, forgive them," &c. His body fell asleep till the resurrection of the just; his soul went to his Saviour.

CHAP. VIII.

SAUL, afterwards the Apostle St. Paul, was one of the chief men amongst the Jews. He had

great talents ; had been brought up by Gamaliel, one of the most learned doctors ; and was early famous for his zeal and energy in doing what he believed to be right. Such a character we may believe the Lord would look upon favourably ; he was conscientious and exact, and spared himself no pains ; and he was judged worthy to receive the truth and to become as active in working for Christ as he had once been in working against Him. The persecution against the Church in Jerusalem brought forth good, for it caused the Christians to fly from that city and to spread the Gospel over other parts of the country. The Apostles, however, still remained at their posts, strengthening the infant Church at Jerusalem. Philip, the deacon, went to preach to the Samaritans. This must have been rather a bold step on his part, for the Samaritans were hated and despised by the Jews, and many of the old Jewish prejudices still clung to those even who were converted to the faith of Christ. The "Simon" we read of in this chapter is Simon Magus ; a wizard or conjurer, who, by the power of the devil, did many wonderful works, and was so successful that he was worshipped by the Romans, afterwards, as a god. When Philip had baptized the converts of Samaria, Peter and John the Apostles were sent from Jerusalem to confirm them. This shows how scriptural the practice of the Church is at

the present day ; Deacons can preach and baptize, but only Bishops can confirm. When Simon saw the wonderful gift of the Holy Ghost given through the laying on of hands, he offered money for the same power ; but Peter said, "Thy money *shall* perish with thee," which was a prophecy. By the twenty-fourth verse, it seems that Simon had some idea of repenting, but he was probably only afraid of the consequences of his sin ; for we know by his history afterwards that he did not repent. On their way home to Jerusalem the Apostles preached in the other villages of Samaria.

The Eunuch here spoken of was a chamberlain, or treasurer, a great officer of the court of one of the African queens. He had come up to Jerusalem to keep one of the great feasts there ; being most likely a proselyte, that is to say, a Gentile convert to the Jewish religion. Philip was sent by God to wait for him, and to explain the difficulties he found in reading the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. This shows us that it is not possible for every one to understand the Bible by his own unaided judgment ; and also that God will not leave us in our difficulties, but will show us a way out of them, if we trust in Him. When the eunuch asked to be baptized, Philip did not wait until he had gained a deep knowledge of all the mysteries of the Christian belief, but he accepted his simple faith, baptized him, and let him go on

his way rejoicing. The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip and carried him to Azotus, or Ashdod ; formerly one of the five royal cities of the Philistines. He then proceeded on a long preaching expedition, and we hear no more of the labours of this holy deacon. He appears to have lived chiefly at Cæsarea ; and, nineteen years afterwards, we find that St. Paul and his companions were hospitably received by Philip and his four daughters, at his house in that city, which seems to have been the chief seat of his labours.

CHAP. IX.

NOT content with persecuting the Christians in Jerusalem, Saul begged to be sent on a persecuting mission to Damascus. Damascus is a very ancient city, a great way from Jerusalem ; and his wish to be sent there shows how Saul at that time hated the Christians. "This way," is commonly used to express the Christian religion.—"This way of thinking."

In that Eastern country the sun shines with a strength and glory of which we have hardly any idea ; so the light that appeared from heaven must have been wonderful, indeed, to have overpowered that bright sunshine.

Jesus said, "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" What is done to Christ's Church, He counts as done to Himself.

"Kicking against the pricks," means, kicking against the goads, like oxen. It was of no use trying to resist the ordinance of God. The men who were with Saul heard a voice, but did not understand what was said.

The spot is still shown where this wonderful scene took place. It is a bridge at the entrance to Damascus.

What wonderful thoughts must have passed through his mind during those three days of darkness! A fit preparation for the life that was to follow.

Saul was converted by the Lord Himself; but observe, he was not left without human help. Ananias was sent to him to heal him, and to tell him what he was to do. Nothing certain is known of the history of Ananias. He was a disciple much trusted and beloved; and, most likely, held some high office in the Church. He is said to have been afterwards Bishop of Damascus, and to have died for the faith. The street called Straight still exists, and is shown to travellers as the street in which St. Paul stayed.

St. Paul was well known as a persecutor, and Ananias was at first afraid to go to him. The Lord then told him He had chosen Saul to be

the Apostle of the Gentiles. It shows the trust and faith of Ananias, that directly he went to him he addressed him as "Brother." If Baptism ever could have been unnecessary, we may suppose it to have been so in the case of St. Paul, so wonderfully converted by God Himself; and yet, directly he received his sight, he arose and *was baptized*. After preaching a short time, St. Paul retired to the desert of Arabia, where he studied and prayed for three years: feeling, no doubt, his need of more light and knowledge. When he returned to Damascus, the Jews sought to kill him. They were, of course, all the more angry at his conversion, because he had been such a tower of strength to their party; and they could not forgive him for forsaking it.

He was let down by the wall; that is to say, most likely from a window of a house on the town-wall. When he came to Jerusalem, none of the disciples would receive him. They did not believe his conversion to be sincere. Barnabas (the Son of Consolation) answered for him, and prevailed upon them to receive him.

The "Grecians," against whom St. Paul disputed, were, as has before been said, the Greek-speaking Jews.

The "Cæsarea" to which the brethren brought St. Paul was not Herod's city, the great Cæsarea

on the sea-coast, but a city much further north, in the province of Iturea, called Cæsarea Philippi.

The churches had rest at this time, because the Jews had no time for persecuting. They were frightened on their own account; for Caligula, the Emperor of Rome, had threatened to put his statue up in the Temple, and to make the Jews worship it.

From Cæsarea Philippi St. Paul went to Tarsus, his own native place—to preach, no doubt, to his own relations and old friends the glad tidings he had himself received.

We learn from his Epistle to the Galatians, that during his first visit (after his conversion) to Jerusalem, he only saw two of the Apostles, St. James and St. Peter.

From this time the Book of Acts is filled chiefly with the account of the work of St. Paul; but we turn here for a brief space to that of St. Peter.

After healing Æneas at Lydda he went to Joppa. Joppa is a town on the sea-coast, about forty miles from Jerusalem. He was sent for to this town to comfort the Christians there for the loss of Dorcas. From the way Dorcas is mentioned, we learn how precious to the Church are the lowly virtues. Judith and Deborah, judges and prophetesses, are praised in the history of holy women; but none are more honourably men-

tioned than Dorcas—a woman who made clothes for the poor.

During his stay in Joppa, Peter lodged with one Simon, a tanner. A tanner is a currier or skinner, and this trade was abominable to the Jews; so the very fact of St. Peter taking up his abode here, shows that he was gradually overcoming his Jewish prejudices, and prepares us for what takes place in the next chapter.

CHAP. X.

THIS Cæsarea is not Cæsarea Philippi, but the great Cæsarea on the sea-coast, the town built by Herod. A great many Roman soldiers were quartered there. You will remember, a centurion is a captain of a hundred men. Cornelius is thought to have been a proselyte of the gate; that is to say, a convert who was not admitted into all the mysteries of the Jewish religion, but one who had given up his false gods and worshipped Jehovah, the true God. The ninth hour of the day was three o'clock in the afternoon, the time of the Jewish evening sacrifice, and one of the Christian "hours of prayer." Joppa is thirty miles from Cæsarea. The angel could, no doubt, have explained the Christian faith to Cornelius; but he told him to send for Peter—

Peter the Apostle, the authorised teacher. Does not this show us we are not to despise human help, and that every man is not able to find out his religion for himself, as many say he may do ?

The "devout soldier" Cornelius called to him was most likely a proselyte; the word "devout" being often used for those who had some knowledge of the true religion. Whilst the messengers of Cornelius were on their journey, Peter was being prepared by a vision for their coming. "The housetop" was the flat roof of the house, a place often used for meditation and prayer. The "sixth hour" is twelve o'clock.

The Book of Leviticus will show you that many animals were forbidden to the Jews for food, and these animals were called unclean.

The vision Peter saw showed him that the distinctions of the Jewish law were done away with; that from this time a Jew was no better than a Gentile; and that nothing God had made was to be called unclean, for the sacrifice of Christ had cleansed and purified everything. The earnestness and anxiety of Cornelius is very affecting. He had called together his kinsmen and near friends. He did not wish to keep his blessings to himself; he longed for all he loved to be partakers of them. When Peter came, the first thing he did was to explain to Cornelius how unusual it was for a Jew to keep company

with a Gentile, taking no credit to himself for setting aside the rule, but telling how God had shown him that there was no more to be a difference between Jew and Gentile.

The answer of Cornelius shows the value of fasting, of prayer, and of almsgiving. Almsgiving and fasting have been called the two wings of prayer. He was using all the means he knew of to obey God's will, and more light was sent him. So will it be with us. Let us make good use of all the opportunities we *have*, and then, most likely, more will be given us.

Peter then began to preach, and to set forth Jesus Christ. From his manner of speaking it is clear that the life and death of Jesus were well known to his hearers, but that they were not aware of His resurrection, nor of His future coming to judge the world, nor of His Godhead. These great truths St. Peter declared to them; and whilst he was yet speaking the Holy Ghost fell upon them. This was the Pentecost of the Gentiles. "They of the circumcision," that is to say, the Christians who had been Jews, were astonished at the Gentiles receiving the same privileges as themselves; and these Gentiles received not only the ordinary, but the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. But though they were so favoured, though they received the highest gifts that could be given them, did St. Peter

consider that it was unnecessary to baptize them ? No ; the first thing he said was, that they were to be baptized in the name of the Lord,—in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

CHAP. XI.

THE Christians in Judæa, not only the brethren but the Apostles, were much surprised at St. Peter's conduct in companying with the Gentiles. They called him to account for it. "They of the circumcision" were of course Jews. St. Peter answers them by telling, in the simplest and most straightforward manner, what befell him at Joppa ; and almost in the same words as in the 10th chapter. He then asked them how he could have resisted the Holy Ghost, which showed so plainly that these Gentiles, Cornelius and his friends, were to be admitted to the privileges considered by the Jews to belong only to themselves ; and not only were to be considered fellow-disciples, but were to be excused from first submitting to Jewish rites and ceremonies ? But these Christians, these "brethren," instead of being angry that the Gentiles were so favoured, were well pleased, and glorified God.

The death of Stephen, and the persecution that followed, brought good to the Church, for those

who fled carried the Gospel to distant parts. At first they only preached to the Jews, for they too held the notion that the glad tidings were only sent to "the chosen people;" but some of their number who were not born Jews, but only made proselytes or converts, preached to the Grecians—that is to say, the Greek-speaking Jews or proselytes—and thus the fold of the Church was widened by degrees.

Directly the Apostles heard of the spread of the Gospel in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to teach and to strengthen the infant Church there. They did not leave it to itself; they did not think that people could settle their religion themselves, without any teaching from those in authority. Barnabas took Saul with him to Antioch; probably he had been desired to call for him at Tarsus.

Antioch was a very beautiful city in Syria (a province north of Galilee); it had a large settlement of Jews, who were allowed to have their own governor. It is now called Antakia, and is a miserable place, full of ruins.

The name of Christians was given to the disciples by the Romans. Agabus, who foretold the great famine, was the same prophet who afterwards foretold the dangers St. Paul would have to go through at Jerusalem. It is likely that these "prophets" were teachers as well as prophets. The great famine foretold by Agabus

came to pass in the fourth year of the reign of the Emperor Claudius, forty-four years after our Lord's birth.

The disciples agreed to send relief to the brethren in Judæa. Their first thought was for others, not for themselves.

"The elders" were the second order in the Church. There were at this time already three orders, apostles, elders, and deacons, answering to our bishops, priests, and deacons.

CHAP. XII.

HEROD the king was Herod Agrippa I., and grandson of that wicked king who was called Herod the Great.

"Stretched forth his hands," is better rendered, "laid hands on certain of the Church." Peter and James were both at Jerusalem, for the feast of the Passover. They were the most forward and zealous of all the Apostles, and would naturally come first before the king's notice. Herod lived at Cæsarea, but had come up to Jerusalem for the feast.

James was the son of Zebedee, and has always been called St. James the Great. He was one of the favourite friends of our Lord, and was the first Apostle who was killed, and the only Apostle

whose death is mentioned in the Bible. It is said that his executioner was so moved by his beautiful conduct, that on the road to death he fell at his feet, confessed himself a Christian, and begged the Apostle's forgiveness. St. James kissed him, and both were beheaded together. St. James's time was fulfilled; but it was necessary that St. Peter should still be spared to the Church. He was kept by four soldiers at a time, who were changed every four hours. Two soldiers watched at the door, and the other two were chained to him, one on each side. Humanly speaking, his escape was impossible; but with God all things are possible. Instant and earnest prayer was made for him, and the prayers of the Church were answered.

The garment the angel told Peter to cast about him, is the outer garment or cloak. How wonderful was the answer to the prayers of those who were praying for him in Mary's house! John Mark, her son, was a great friend of St. Peter, and the writer of the second Gospel. It was therefore natural that St. Peter should first seek her house. At this time, and long afterward, the Christians met at night for greater safety. Mark is supposed by some writers to have been the man with the pitcher on his head, in whose house the disciples prepared the last supper; and it is said

that "the upper room" in this house was always afterwards used for the services of the Christians.

If this were the case, St. Peter would naturally go there to show himself to the congregation before departing to a more hidden place of safety. We hear no more of St. Peter in the Book of Acts. The James he spoke of was St. James the Less, the cousin of our Lord, and the first Bishop of Jerusalem. Herod's death was a very terrible one. We learn from history that he sat upon his throne arrayed in a robe of silver, and as it shone in the morning sun his flatterers saluted him as a god. He was seized with terrible pains, was carried from his seat, and died in a short time.

Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch: their ministry had been to carry the alms of the Christians at Antioch to the Christians at Jerusalem, against the time of the great famine foretold by Agabus. The last verse of this chapter ought to be the first of the next chapter; for the history of the death of James, the imprisonment of Peter, and the death of Herod, comes in between the history of the Church at Antioch, before and after the journey of Barnabas and Saul.

CHAP. XIII.

ANTIOCH seems to have been the head-quarters of those who were about to make the Gospel known to the Gentiles.

Simeon, called Niger, is not spoken of any more in the sacred writings. Niger means "black." Lucius we hear of again, as St. Paul names him in the sixteenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Manaen was the foster-brother of the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist and mocked our Saviour. The words "ministered to the Lord" mean, serving the Lord in public worship. Barnabas and Saul did not depart to preach until they had been solemnly called, and then solemnly set apart for the work.

Seleucia, where they went first, was the seaport of Antioch, and about fifteen miles from that town. Cyprus was an island not far from Seleucia, and was the native country of St. Barnabas. Salamis was a seaport, on the east coast of Cyprus. According to the custom of the Apostles, they here first preached the Word of God to the Jews. "They had John to their minister," means they had John Mark for their attendant in the services of the Church. "Through the isle," was a distance of about one hundred miles to Paphos, on the west side. The Roman governor lived in

this town, and it was famous for its wicked heathen practices.

Bar-jesus, means, "son of Jesus," or Joshua. The "Deputy" means the Pro-consul, or Roman governor. Elymas means "a wise man," or magician.

This is the first time Saul is called Paul in the Acts. It has been said that he took the name of Paul, or Paulus, in honour of the conversion of Sergius Paulus.

The unbelief of Elymas was the cause of the belief of Paulus the governor, for the miracle of his blindness made the Roman feel there was something holy and wonderful in the Apostle's doctrine. St. Paul told Elymas he should not see the sun "for a season." This seems to show that the punishment was only for a time; and so we may not be wrong in hoping that he afterwards repented.

When they left Cyprus and came to Pamphylia, Paul and Barnabas had a great sorrow in the falling away of Mark, who was either tired of the work or frightened at the labours they would have to undergo. He was afterwards the cause of a quarrel between Barnabas and Paul, but was finally reconciled to St. Paul, and is spoken of affectionately by him in his Second Epistle to Timothy.

Antioch in Pisidia was a large town, full of



Romans, Greeks, and Jews. The way from Perga to it was very dangerous, across mountains with swollen torrents, and very likely full of robbers. Perhaps it was the prospect of this journey that alarmed John Mark.

In a Jewish synagogue the prayers were recited first by the apostle, or angel. The book of the sacred writings was then handed to the reader by the chazan, or minister; and a lesson was read from the Law, and then another from the Prophets, like our first and second lesson. Afterwards an explanation was given, and then learned men and strangers were invited to address the people. It was at this time that the rulers of the synagogue sent to Paul and Barnabas; and in answer to the request, Paul, who seems to have taken the lead from the time they were at Cyprus, stood up and preached. There is little to explain in his sermon. It is a straightforward and short history of the Israelites; showing that they had always looked for a Messiah, and proving from the Psalms that this Messiah had already come. He told them that the glad tidings was sent to *them*, as the children of the stock of Abraham; that the Jews of Jerusalem had fulfilled the prophecies in killing the Saviour, but that they had yet the chance of accepting Him, and believing in His resurrection. He ended his discourse with a fearful warning. As usual, the

Jews left him, but the Gentiles sought the truth. The scenes of the next Sabbath called up the bitter anger of the Jews; they could not endure that the Gentiles should have any religious privileges; they thought their own nation was the only one beloved of God. They never rested until they had turned Paul and Barnabas out of the city. What was the consequence? "The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." Nothing can discourage the true Christian. When things look darkest, the light of God is often very near.

CHAP. XIV.

ICONIUM was about ninety miles east of Antioch in Pisidia. It was the chief town of Lycaonia. It is now called Konieh, and still contains about thirty thousand people. In this place the mission seems to have been more successful amongst the Jews than it was in Antioch. Two great parties arose in the city, and part held with the unbelieving Jews and part with the Apostles. When the Apostles heard of the plan that had been made to stone them, they fled. It is not wrong for Christians to fly from persecution, if they sacrifice no part of the truth in order to do so.

Lystra and Derbe were cities in the same pro-

vince, but in a wild hill country ; and the people who lived there were wild and rough. When Paul cured the lame man, they thought directly that the Apostles were gods.

They worshipped the false god, Jupiter, whose temple stood outside their gates. This god, Jupiter, was supposed to have an attendant god, called Mercury, who was eloquent of speech ; and because Paul was the chief speaker, they thought he was Mercurius, and that Barnabas was Jupiter.

They brought oxen to sacrifice to them, and garlands, because it was the practice to crown the heads of the victims who were about to be sacrificed.

St. Paul was followed by his enemies from Antioch and Iconium. They, most likely, persuaded the people that all St. Paul had done was by the help of evil spirits ; and that he was only a criminal escaped from Iconium, to avoid the punishment due to his crimes. The natives of Lystra were a wild and ignorant set, and their respect for Paul was easily changed into hatred. They stoned him in the city ; for there was no rule here against stoning within the walls, as there was at Jerusalem. They then flung him out of the city, and left him for dead. Amongst the crowd of disciples who stood round about him, we may suppose Timothy to have been ; Timothy, the learned in the Scriptures, whom we

know to have been converted by St. Paul during this visit to Lystra, and who was afterwards a Bishop. St. Paul was able to travel the day after his stoning : this must have been a miracle. The treatment they had received from the people at Lystra did not prevent them from returning there after their visit to Derbe. The small band of faithful were to be confirmed, and exhorted, and encouraged : Rulers and Clergy were to be appointed and ordained. Before the Apostles ordained, or laid hands on any man, they fasted and prayed. This is the reason the Church observes Ember Days now ; they are days set apart for fasting and prayer during the week before an ordination takes place. Having arranged for the due government of the Churches, they set out on their return home, passing again by Pisidia and Perga, and preaching in the latter place. They set sail from Attalia, a seaport town in Pamphylia, (it is now called Satalia); and so returned to Antioch in Syria, to give an account of their labours. It is thought that this missionary journey took about two years, and that they remained at Antioch about two years more.

CHAP. XV.

THESE "certain men," which came down from Judæa, were of the stricter sort of Jews; men who could not bear the law of Moses to be made of less importance than the Gospel; men who held to the minutest ceremonies of that law, and who tried, in fact, to be Christians and Jews at the same time. Their conduct was what our Saviour had called "putting new wine into old bottles." They not only told the Christians of Antioch that it was *necessary* to keep the law of Moses, but that they could not be saved unless they did so. There was a great dispute in the city on the subject, but the heads of the Church there did not take upon themselves to decide the question, but sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, to get the opinion of the Apostles and Elders on the matter. This shows that Jerusalem was still the head-quarters of the Church.

"Being brought on their way by the Church," probably means, that their fellow-Christians paid their expenses from one place to another. Everywhere as they went they told the wonderful news of the conversion of the Gentiles, and everywhere the news was received with joy. True Christians are overjoyed when they hear that others are admitted to the same privileges as themselves.

This was St. Paul's third visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. The first was when he spent a fortnight with Peter; the second, when he brought the alms of the Christians of Antioch to their brethren in Judæa, and was most likely obliged to depart suddenly, owing to the persecution which killed James and imprisoned Peter. It was now about fifteen years since his conversion.

Paul and Barnabas found the same dispute going on at Jerusalem. The Pharisaic Christians had stirred it up. A meeting of the Church was then held; the first Council of the Church, the first time the Christians, as a body, had pronounced any important decision upon any one point. The "much disputing" we read of was most likely much *arguing*. Each person gave his opinion in turn. At last Peter stood up, and reminded them of what happened to him some years ago in Joppa. If God had given the Holy Ghost to those uncircumcised Gentiles in Cæsarea, how should man lay a greater yoke upon them? Then Barnabas and Paul stood up, and in their turn told the wonderful things they had seen done among the Gentiles. James the Just, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, then gave the decision, first calling their attention to the prophecy in the ninth chapter of Amos. The sentence was short, and given in the simplest

language. "Pollutions of idols," were meats offered to idols in heathen worship. Of these Christians were not to eat, if they knew the meats to have been so offered. It has been thought strange that a great sin should be mentioned at the same time as two directions about meats, which seem of so little consequence in comparison. But it must be remembered, that this sin was looked upon by the Gentiles in those days as no sin at all, and was sometimes considered as belonging to the worship of their false gods. St. James ends his sentence by saying, that the *Jewish* Christians would have no need of these directions, because *they* would have the law of Moses read in the synagogues,—the law which, of course, expressly forbade any such doings.

The Apostles sent Judas and Silas back with Paul and Barnabas, probably as additional witnesses if their word should be doubted. Judas Barsabas is said to have been the brother of Joseph Barsabas, who was with Matthias named for the office of Apostle. Silas is sometimes called Silvanus.

Judas and Silas were sent with them; they did not send themselves: and when they came to Antioch they did not depart until permission was given them—until they were "let go." This shows us, that even then there was discipline and

obedience in the Church. Permission to depart was necessary ; but they were not in this instance "*sent away*," for we read "that it pleased Silas to abide there still." And when he made his choice he little knew that he was chosen by the Holy Ghost to accompany St. Paul on his second missionary journey.

Paul's heart was yearning after the converts he had made, even in the city which had stoned him, and he proposed to Barnabas to go over the same ground again. Barnabas wished to take the same "*minister*," or "*attendant*," his nephew, John Mark ; but Paul would not consent to allow him to go with them. He had failed once, and might fail again. And so these two good men quarrelled ; one through excess of kindness, the other through excess of zeal : but we know that in after years they were reconciled, and that St. Paul had afterwards a very high opinion of Mark. See the last chapter of his Second Epistle to Timothy.

Cyprus was, you will remember, St. Barnabas's native place. By this quarrel the mission gained ; for it was divided, and two parties went forth instead of one.

St. Paul and Silas did not leave Antioch lightly. They were recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. This shows the spirit in which a missionary should depart.

And now, when bishops, priests, and deacons go forth to heathen countries from our own land, a solemn farewell service is generally held, and the grace of God is besought for them by all the brethren.

CHAP. XVI.

AFTER Paul and Barnabas had separated, Paul went to his own province, Cilicia, where, it is natural to suppose, he visited his native city, Tarsus, and his own friends and relations. Barnabas went to his native island, Cyprus, and we hear no more of him. From Tarsus to Iconium is about four days' journey, and Derbe and Lystra are near Iconium. St. Paul has no fear in returning to the scene of his former persecution. At Derbe he finds Timotheus, of an age and character to be useful to him in the Gospel: he had probably, during the time of St. Paul's absence, been growing in grace and faith, and now was ready to be the companion of the Apostle in his dangers and trials. But it was not without taking counsel of the brethren at Lystra and at Iconium that Paul decided he was fit for the office; his ordination appears to have been well considered beforehand, and to have taken place with all solemnity, and by the

advice of the Church. St. Paul in his epistle, a long time afterwards, reminds Timothy of the gift that was in him, of the laying on of hands, and of the day of ordination.

But why did St. Paul circumcise Timothy, and refuse to circumcise Titus? Why did he, who had declared the rite to be of no consequence in the days of the Gospel, desire Timothy to undergo this ceremony? Because it was necessary in all things to avoid offence. Timothy's father was a Greek, and therefore the Jews might refuse to admit him to their synagogues if they knew him to be uncircumcised. Timothy's mother was a Jewess, and therefore he might lawfully submit to this ceremony. Being partly Gentile and partly Jew, having submitted to Jewish laws, and yet having a largeness of view as a Gentile, which, as a Jew, he could not have had, he would have double weight with both parties, and thereby be of more use to the cause of the Gospel.

The decrees they delivered in the cities were, of course, the three decrees which we read of in the fifteenth chapter—the decrees passed by the Council in Jerusalem. We know from St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians that he was taken ill in Galatia, and that the Galatians were very kind to him. The Apostles were not allowed to keep to their own plans, but were directed by the

Holy Ghost. They were forbidden to preach any more at that time in Asia; so their eyes were guided towards Europe, and a vision showed them they were to preach in Macedonia, a country north of Greece. At Troas, which was called Alexandria Troas, a large seaport town, we learn from the word "we," that they were joined by St. Luke, who wrote this book: if, indeed, he had not been with them during their stay in Galatia; for, since St. Paul had been ill there, we may well imagine that Luke, "the beloved physician," might have attended him,


Samothracia is an island; Neapolis was a harbour; Philippi was a great city, enlarged by King Philip of Macedon, the father of the great conqueror Alexander. This voyage was made with a fair wind in two days; some time afterwards the same distance took five. Philippi being "a colony," means, it was under Roman laws, and all who were inhabitants of it became Roman citizens. This was considered a great privilege. There were not many Jews in Philippi, and they had no synagogue; so prayer was made in a *proseucha*, or oratory, on the banks of the river Strymon, and the congregation seems to have been only a few women.

Thyatira was a city in Asia, famous for its guild of dyers, of whom Lydia appears to have been one. She had come over to Philippi on

matters of business, and probably had a place of trade in that town as well as in Thyatira.

The damsel which had a spirit of divination was a slave; perhaps insane, perhaps possessed by the devil. At any rate, her wild sayings were heard with veneration by the people, and her cure made her owners very angry. It was a crime amongst the Romans to teach a new religion without leave from the state; so they accused Paul and Silas of doing so, hoping by this means to get them punished. The magistrates rent off their clothes—not their own clothes, but ordered the Apostles' outer garments to be torn off, that they might be scourged with rods. The jailer put them into the inner dungeon, which was the worst part of the prison. A Roman jailer had to answer for his prisoners with his life: the keeper of the prison, therefore, wished to avoid dishonour and a public sentence, when he thought the prisoners had escaped. St. Paul, without seeing him, knew what he was doing, and called out to him. This astonished the jailer still more. He delayed no longer; he heard the truth, accepted it, and was baptized, with his whole family.

He brought them *up* into his house: the inner prison was probably underground. It was a great crime to beat a Roman citizen, and especially uncondemned: the magistrates, when they



heard their prisoners were Romans, were, therefore, much alarmed; but Paul would not be satisfied without a public apology. They were desired to depart out of the city, but they did not go until they had comforted the little band of faithful Christians in Lydia's house. The mission at Philippi, though short, had been successful; and one of the purest and most faultless Churches was planted there. St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians shows that the converts there were in a very high spiritual state.

CHAP. XVII.

Amphipolis was about twenty-eight miles from Philippi, where St. Luke is supposed to have been left for awhile. It was a great trading city. Apollonia was about twenty-five, and Thessalonica about thirty-two miles further.

Thessalonica was also a great city for trade, and is still a place of great consequence, containing 70,000 people. It is now called Saloniki. It appears to have been the only town out of these four that contained a Jewish synagogue. It afterwards became one of the Christian Churches, and received two Epistles from St. Paul. The preaching of St. Paul here and elsewhere appears to have been exactly the same

teaching which we gain from the reading of the holy Gospels, and comparing them with the Prophets: he showed them that the Messiah was expected, and then told them the history of the death and rising again of our Lord, which exactly agreed with what the Prophets had said. One of our great English unbelievers was converted in this way, by reading the 51st chapter of Isaiah and comparing it with the last chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel.

Paul and Silas lodged at Jason's house. He may have been the Jason mentioned by St. Paul as a kinsman in his Epistle to the Romans.

The same cry which had been raised against our Saviour was here raised against the Apostles, by the lowest of the people. The Jews cared not for Cæsar, but knew that any accusation of this kind was sure to be taken up by the Gentiles. Here, however, St. Paul's chief converts were amongst the Gentiles, and not amongst the Jews, who seem to have been even more obstinate and violent than usual. Paul and Silas were hidden by their friends, or had escaped from the tumult; for only Jason and his companions were taken before the magistrates: and this same Jason and one "other" stood bail for the accused! Thessalonica was "a free city," governed by its own Greek magistrates, called "politarchs," but under the Roman Emperor.

It is thought that Timothy was left here by Paul to take care of the infant Church for a time, as Luke had been left at Philippi.


Berea is a town about forty-five miles further. Of course the Scriptures that the Jews of Berea searched were the Scriptures of the Old Testament. This shows us how plainly we may find Christ in the Old Testament as well as in the New. We are not told how long St. Paul stayed at Berea. Possibly he watched over the converts at Thessalonica from that distance, hoping to return to them; but the violence of his enemies followed him, and they were not content until they had hunted him from Berea.

Athens was a beautiful city, the capital of Greece. Many learned men lived there, and spent their days in talking of and judging every new opinion that came before them. They worshipped many heathen gods; and when the Romans conquered Athens, they took a great deal of the religion of Greece and joined it on to their own. The town of Athens was full of temples, and altars, and images of false gods. It was called the most religious place in the world; but the religion was a false one, and made people worse instead of better. When St. Paul landed there, he saw on every side images of gods that never had lived, and this made him very unhappy. He not only tried to convert the Jews,

who worshipped the true God but knew nothing of Jesus Christ, but he argued with the philosophers, or learned men, who were Gentiles or heathen, and worshipped these false gods. The Epicureans were people who lived only for pleasure. The Stoics were people who declared that a man could grow wise and good by his own strength, if he really wished it. Areopagus was the same place as Mars' Hill: it was the place where the great court of justice was held, and also public arguing or disputing. Mars was the name for one of the false gods, the god of war.

"I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious," is better translated, "I see that you are very careful in all matters of your religion." "Your devotions" means, "your temples, your images, and your altars."

Though the Athenians had so many gods, they were afraid of making some gods angry by leaving them out; so they built more altars still, and dedicated them to "unknown gods," in case they had neglected any. St. Paul tells them he is come to declare to them the *true* God, which is the God they ignorantly worship,—a God who has no need of any of their beautiful temples,—a God who cannot be worshipped in statues made by hands,—a God who made all mankind from one single pair; for the Athenians were so proud,



they thought their nation had sprung from the earth, instead of coming from other nations.

"God winked at," means, "God *overlooked*, or *excused*, the times of this ignorance." St. Paul then tells them of the Man whom God appointed to die for the world, and then to judge it: but scarcely does he name the Resurrection before they interrupt him. They never had a chance of hearing him again; for, finding how hard their hearts were, he left them. Only two persons are mentioned as believing. Dionysius, a member of the great court of justice, is said to have been the first Bishop of Athens, and afterwards died for the faith. It is not known who Damaris was.

CHAP. XVIII.

THIS was St. Paul's first visit to Corinth, and he was the first person who preached Christianity to the people of that place. Corinth was a great, rich city, given up to sin and to pleasure. It is in a province called Achaia, and like Athens and Thessalonica, and all the great cities of that time, it had been conquered by that wonderful people the Romans. Aquila and Priscilla, with whom he lodged, are thought to have been people of wealth and education. They were tent-makers,

and it is supposed that they had a manufactory at Corinth, and employed many workmen, for "the Church that is in their house" is spoken of in the epistles. St. Paul worked at this trade while he was with them, and thus paid for his own board and lodging; carrying out the precept he gives to others, that "if any man will not work, neither shall he eat."

The Jews always taught every child a trade, whether his parents were rich or poor; for they said, he who did not teach his child a trade taught him to be a thief. St. Paul, therefore, had been brought up to the trade of tent-making, and these tents were made of goats' hair, which was a produce of his native province, Cilicia.

Every Sabbath he reasoned with the Jews and the Greeks. His first message, as usual, was to the Jews: his first place of preaching was the appointed place, the synagogue: and it was not until the Jews blasphemed that he left them and departed from the synagogue. He still lodged in Aquila's house, but preached in Justus's house. Justus is spoken of as "one that worshipped God;" to show that, though not yet converted to the Gospel, he was not one of the heathen Greeks. He was most likely what was called a "prose-lyte," one who had partly been converted to the Jewish religion. Paul himself baptized Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue.

Corinth was such a wicked city, that when Paul was comforted by God's telling him He had much people there, he must have been astonished. By this we learn not to be soon cast down when things seem to go wrong with us : we know not how many of God's people may be near us—some of them far better than ourselves.

Gallio was the Roman governor of Achaia. He was brother to Seneca, a very learned man. They were both put to death by Nero, the Emperor of Rome. Gallio was an easy-going man, and did not care much for any religion ; so the Jews thought, when he came, that it would be a good opportunity to accuse Paul. When the Jews failed to get Paul condemned, and were sent away from Gallio's judgment-seat, the Greeks, who were always at enmity with them, beat the chief Jew, Sosthenes. They beat him, not because they loved Paul, but because they hated the Jews. Paul was a year and a half in Corinth ; he left a flourishing Church there, but his converts seem to have been chiefly amongst the poorer sort.

During his stay in Corinth he wrote the Epistles to the Romans and the Thessalonians.

We are not told what was the reason of his vow ; we only know it was common amongst the Jews to make vows for religious purposes, and to let their hair grow during the time of the vow :

the cutting or shearing of the hair was a sign that the vow was completed. Cenchrea was the eastern seaport of Corinth.

Aquila and Priscilla were going to stay at Ephesus for some time; Paul was merely passing through on his way to Jerusalem. The feast that he was in such haste to go up to Jerusalem for, is supposed to have been the feast of Pentecost. However, he found time to reason with the Jews, who here appear to have been more open to the truth than those of Corinth. We know not whether he was in time for the feast of Pentecost or not: we are told he "went up" from Cæsarea; that is, went to Jerusalem, and saluted the Church: that is, the Christians who were there. You will remember Pentecost answers to our Whitsuntide, and at that time the Holy Ghost came down upon the disciples. Perhaps St. Paul may have "gone up" for the Christian festival held in memory of that glorious event.

This was his fourth journey to Jerusalem. Afterwards he went to Antioch. There were many Christians in this place, and doubtless it was a time of great rest and refreshment. He then began his third missionary journey, and in the course of it returned to Ephesus, as he had promised; where he found, that during his absence a good man, called Apollonius or Apollos, a disciple of John the Baptist, had been carrying

on the work St. Paul had begun when on his first visit there. He was not so far advanced in Christian knowledge as some ; but he was brave and zealous, and God always sends help to those who look for it, and guides into truth those who make good use of the knowledge they have. Aquila and Priscilla were his teachers ; you have read they were wise and learned people, and Aquila is said to have made a new translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. At any rate, he seems to have taught Apollos carefully in the Scriptures, for it was from the Old Testament that Apollos, who was a most powerful speaker, afterwards proved to the unbelieving Jews of Corinth that Jesus was, or rather "is," the Christ.

It would be interesting to know the end of that holy couple, Aquila and Priscilla : we are told very little about them ; we hear of them again at Rome, and there is a tradition that their heads were cut off in one of the persecutions.

CHAP. XIX.

THE "upper coasts" Paul passed through are the mountainous country of the inland part of Asia Minor, not any part of the sea-coast. The disciples he found at Ephesus had been taught as

far as St. John the Baptist's teaching went ; they had been taught to look for and expect the Holy Ghost, but they had not heard of His descent at Pentecost : they had not received His ordinary, neither His extraordinary, gifts. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost are the gift of tongues (being able to speak all languages without learning them) ; the power of working miracles (such as healing the sick, raising the dead) ; the gift of prophecy, which means the power of telling what is going to happen. These gifts were given to the Apostles, and to many good people, in the early times of the Church ; but they are not given in our days, for they are no longer necessary to prove that the Christian religion is the true one.

However, we may all obtain the *ordinary* gifts of the Spirit, which the 5th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians tells us are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance."

After the disciples at Ephesus had been baptized Paul laid his hands on them, and they received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. Here we have the ceremony of Confirmation, which, even with children in olden times, followed much sooner upon baptism than it does in these days.

At first Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue, as he did at Corinth ; but when the Jews began

to speak evil of "*that way*," which means, *the way*, the way of truth, he withdrew from the synagogue into the school of Tyrannus; just as, when at Corinth, he withdrew to the house of Justus. He was at Ephesus about three years, and during that time he wrote what we call the First Epistle to the Corinthians, though, in reality, it is the Second; and what we call the Second, is the Third. During his second year at Ephesus he paid a short visit to Corinth; and after his return he wrote the Christians there a short letter, rebuking them for their unholy living. The Corinthians sent a letter in return, asking many questions; and the answer to this letter is what we call the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

St. Paul baptized the converts at Ephesus into the name of the Lord Jesus: but he is thought to have used the form set forth by our Lord, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The Lord Jesus being God, of course, the name of the Holy Trinity would be His name also.

The "vagabond Jews, exorcists," mentioned in the thirteenth verse, were people who pretended to work miracles; a kind of wandering fortunetellers. These men thought the word "Jesus" was the charm by which Paul worked miracles; and they tried to do the same. The fact of Sceva's seven

sons being amongst them shows how low the Jewish priesthood must have fallen.

St. Paul had much to do in Ephesus, for it was a great and magnificent city, and people came there from all parts: people of different nations, different religions, and different languages. But the natives of Ephesus themselves worshipped an idol called Diana. This idol was a very ugly image of wood, supposed to have fallen down from heaven: it had a face, and its hands held two great bars of metal; but its body ended in a shapeless block of wood. This frightful image was lodged in one of the most beautiful temples in the world, 425 feet long and 220 broad: it had 127 columns, 60 feet high, each given by a king: its doors were of cypress, its roof of cedar; the staircase was made out of one vine, from the isle of Cyprus; and the building was joined to the city by a long walk between two rows of columns. This splendid temple was built by heathen to adore an ugly image in; how much more ought Christians to build beautiful churches for the worship of the true God!

The city was a great seat of curious and magical arts. In those days all books were very expensive, because there was no printing, and they had to be written out by hand; and the books of magic (books which pretended to instruct

people how to perform miracles), were the most expensive of all. The books of magic burnt by those who were converted were worth about 1770*l.* of our money. The silver shrines which Demetrius and the other workmen made were small models of the temple and image of Diana, which were bought for worship in private houses, worn as charms, or carried away by strangers as curiosities. Of course, if St. Paul converted all the people, none of these little silver models or shrines would be bought, and thus the workmen would suffer. Demetrius, therefore, wanted to get up a riot, and turn Paul out of the city. The outcry the crowd made was an act of worship, like the "O Baal, hear us!" of the false prophets. The "theatre" they rushed into was a large place without a roof, but with stone seats rising one above another. In this place they held their public meetings.

The chief of Asia, who would not let Paul go into the theatre, were the great men of the city, the Asiarchs. They were chosen every year to preside over the public games, the expense of which they bore.

It is not known who "Alexander" was. It was a common name in those parts. He was put forward by the Jews to tell the Ephesians that they had no fellowship with Paul.

"The town-clerk," was the second man in the

city, and had great power. "Keeper of the records," or "Chancellor," describes his office better. He tells them that all the world knew how the city of Ephesus was a worshipper, or "temple-keeper," of the goddess Diana, and therefore no one could contradict it. He tells them, Paul and his companions neither blasphemed their idol nor robbed their temple; and if Demetrius and his workmen had any cause of complaint against them, they might go to the law-courts: but, by making a riot, they would only draw down upon them the anger of the Romans, who had conquered that city, but who allowed them to govern themselves as long as they behaved peaceably.

CHAP. XX.

A VERY anxious and busy part of St. Paul's life is mentioned in one short verse, the second verse of this chapter. "When he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation," is all that is said of ten months' hard work.

If a man in these days had done likewise, what a deal we should have heard about it! There would have been letters and missionary journals, and speeches containing the account of all his doings. But a saint's life is very different. Only

just so much as is necessary are we told; the rest is hid with Christ in God.

In the course of these busy months, we know from his own writings that he waited for Titus at Troas (Titus, whom he had sent to Corinth with the First Epistle to the Corinthians); and so anxious was he to know how the Corinthians had received the letter he had sent them, that though he found many at Troas ready to listen to him, he would not stay to found a Church in that town, but hastened on to Philippi, where Titus joined him. From Philippi he wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians; and when he had finished his work in Macedonia, he went into Greece and stayed at Corinth three months, putting to rights the disorders in the Church there and maintaining discipline. When there, he wrote his Epistle to the Galatians, having heard that the Church of Galatia had been led away by false teachers; and the Epistle to the Romans is also supposed to have been written about this time and sent by Phœbe, a deaconess of Cenchrea, which you will remember was the seaport town of Corinth.

During these journeyings, St. Paul was collecting money for the poor Christians in Palestine. The collection had been going on for more than a year. Each person laid by what he could afford on the first day of the week; then the

whole was collected and entrusted to treasurers, who were to carry it to Jerusalem in company with St. Paul. St. Paul had intended to have sailed direct from Greece to Syria, as he had before done, but a plot of the Jews made him change his mind and go by land through Macedonia. His friends went on before and waited for him at Troas, but St. Luke and himself stayed at Philippi until after Easter. The passage from Philippi to Troas can be made in two days with a fair wind, but as in this instance it took five days, they probably had contrary winds or calms. The week's stay at Troas gave Paul the opportunity of founding a Church there, and preaching to those people whom he had been obliged to neglect on his former hurried visit.

The Christian assembly, held on the first day of the week (our Sunday), appears to have taken place at night; according to an ancient method of counting, days were reckoned from sunset to sunset, and not from midnight to midnight, as we reckon them. In that case Sunday would begin at sunset on Saturday and end at sunset on Sunday. The vessel which was to take St. Paul away was to sail on Sunday morning, so possibly the Christian service was held a few hours sooner, to enable himself and his companions to attend it. Breaking of bread is par-

ticularly mentioned, for the Christians never assembled together without having the Holy Communion. It was considered the great act of Christian worship, and in many cases was celebrated every day. It was only in later times that this solemn act of worship was so seldom performed. Eutychus fell from the third loft, or story; he must have been sitting in a kind of balcony, and most likely fell backwards into the court below. The next morning Luke and his companions went on board the ship, but St. Paul stayed a few hours longer in Troas, and purposed walking over alone to Assos (about twenty miles off), where the ship was to take him in. Perhaps he wished to say something more to his converts at Troas: perhaps he wished for the quiet of that long lonely walk through the oak woods. Mitylene is now called Castro, and is the capital of the island of Lesbos. Samos was about fifty miles from Chios; Miletus was about thirty miles from Ephesus. So much of his journeying had to be done by sea, that he was obliged to allow time for contrary winds, and therefore he was afraid to go to Ephesus; but he sent for the chief men of the church there to come to him, most likely whilst the trading ship in which he sailed took in or gave out some of her merchandise. They made no delay, and the meeting took place on land; but

whether in a house or on the sea-shore is not told us.

The "grievous wolves" spoken of by St. Paul in his address to the Ephesians are false teachers. That this Church met with the fate foretold by him we know from St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy (its Bishop), second chapter, seventeenth verse, and from the second chapter of Revelation.

The saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," is not found in any of the Gospels, but lived in the memory of the disciples. It is probable that St. Paul *did* pay another visit to Ephesus, but his conviction of coming danger was so strong that he wished to prepare his friends there for scenes which he thought would end in his death.

CHAP. XXI.

THE sentence, "after we were gotten from them," is really, "after we had been torn from them," and shows with what grief they parted from the faithful men of Ephesus.

Coos, now called Stancho, is an island forty miles south of Miletus. Rhodes is an island about fifty miles further south-east; and Patara is a port of Lycia, sixty miles east of Rhodes. The voyage of the ship they were in ended at Patara, so they

were forced to get into another ship, which was bound for Phœnicia, the long narrow strip of coast that divided Galilee from the Mediterranean Sea. It is about three hundred and forty miles from Patara to Tyre. The Spirit did not, through the disciples at Tyre, *forbid* Paul to go up to Jerusalem, but only warned him not to do so if he valued his life. The disciples of Tyre, with their wives and children, accompanied St. Paul out of the city, and saw him and his companions safely on board the ship that was to take them to Ptolemais, now called Acre. The Philip, into whose house they went at Cæsarea, was Philip the Deacon. Evangel means "Gospel," or "glad tidings," and he is called an evangelist, because he preached these glad tidings.

The prophecy of Agabus was fulfilled exactly as he had predicted.

"We took up our carriages," means, "we took up what we had to carry," namely, our *luggage*. "Brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus," is better translated, "Brought us to one Mnason of Cyprus." James, to whom Paul went the day after his arrival at Jerusalem, was the Lord's brother, and the first Bishop of Jerusalem. This was St. Paul's fifth visit to Jerusalem. The elders wished Paul to join the men who were keeping the Jewish custom of the vow, because they hoped the Jews would then see that he was

no despiser of the law, as commonly reported, but kept it so far as was consistent with his Christian calling.

The vow generally lasted thirty days, and during this time those who had taken it let their hair grow. Any one might join them in this religious observance, provided he paid their expenses in order to enable them to offer the gifts and sacrifices due at the end of the time.

A long account of this ordinance will be found in the sixth chapter of Numbers.

The chief captain of the band was the commander of a thousand Roman soldiers, who garrisoned Jerusalem.

The castle into which Paul was carried was the Castle of Antonia. It nearly joined the Temple, for it was built at an angle of it. The stairs were the steps leading from the portico of the Temple to the Castle. The people cried, "Away with him!" meaning to kill him. The captain did not believe Paul could speak Greek, because he thought, from the tumult the people made, that he must be a certain Egyptian robber, who, five years before, had raised a rebellion. Paul spoke in the Hebrew or Syro-Chaldean tongue, because the Jews were more likely to listen to that ancient and holy language.

CHAP. XXII.

As the Apostle had foreseen, the Jews listened quietly to him when he spoke the language of the Old Testament, the language their own law was written in.

Tarsus, where, as he told them, he was born, was not one of those Roman colonies where all citizens were free of the city of Rome by birth. Augustus, the Roman Emperor, made it free, allowed it to be governed by its own laws, but did not give its inhabitants the rights of Roman citizens. It was a very famous city, the capital of Cilicia, in Asia Minor, and was celebrated for its schools and learning. It is still a large town, and has about thirty thousand inhabitants. St. Paul says he was brought up in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel. It was usual for scholars to sit on the ground, or on low benches below the chair of the teacher. "This way," means the Christian religion. Jesus said, "Why persecutest thou *me*?" because those who persecute Christ's disciples are guilty of persecuting Christ Himself. He called Himself "Jesus of Nazareth," because the Christians were known to the Jews by the name of Nazarenes, which was a term of reproach.

"They heard not the voice of Him that spake to me," means, "They could not make out the words that were spoken."

The direction of Ananias that St. Paul should arise and be baptized, and wash away his sin, shows plainly the truth of the belief of our Church "in one baptism for the remission of sins." The seventeenth verse of this chapter supplies what was wanting in the history of the ninth chapter. See twenty-sixth verse. St. Paul thought that, having proved himself such a violent persecutor of the Christians *before* his conversion, the Jews would the more readily believe his witness in favour of it *afterward*. Our Lord told him that this would not be the case, and that he must go to the Gentiles. The very mention of the Gentiles put the Jews into a fury. Throwing of dust into the air was a sign that the accused had spoken against the law, and was not to be heard any further. The casting off their outer garments was in order to stone Paul, as they had stoned Stephen. The "chief captain" was a Roman, the tribune of the soldiers, the commanding officer of the garrison who had a thousand men under him.

This man did not understand Hebrew, and could not make out what all the noise was about, so he commanded Paul to be examined by scourging, which was the way the Romans

had of making slaves confess the truth. The person to be scourged or whipped was bound to a stake by straps, like the harness of a horse.

St. Paul was a Roman citizen, though a Jew. It is supposed that his father bought the rights of a Roman citizen ; and it was against the law to scourge a Roman, or to bind him. When the Captain heard that he was a Roman, he took him away from him that was to have *examined* or *tortured* him ; but he would not acknowledge himself in the wrong : he kept him *bound* until the next day ; and then, wishing to know of what he was accused, he brought him before the Sanhedrim, or great Council of the Jews.

CHAP. XXIII.

" SMITING on the mouth " was the Eastern way of silencing a speaker. Ananias was fulfilling the office of the high priest, to which at that time no one had yet been regularly appointed. St. Paul called him a " whited wall," which means a hypocrite ; and said, " God shall smite thee : " a prophecy which was fulfilled six years after, when, in a riot, Ananias was dragged from an aqueduct, where he had hidden himself, and killed. " I wist not that he was the high priest," is thought by some writers to mean that St. Paul, having only

lately returned to Jerusalem, did not know that Ananias filled the office: but others think that it means, "I spoke hastily, and did not remember that he was the high priest."

The Sadducees did not believe in the Resurrection; the Pharisees did: and by crying out, "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question," St. Paul divided his enemies into two parties. This made a tumult amongst them; and the chief captain had once more to rescue him from the Jews.

The forty Jews who swore to kill Paul are supposed to have belonged to the sect of the Zealots; a very violent set of men, who were earnest about religion, but thought it no sin to kill any one they considered dangerous to their religion. They intended to murder him on his way from the Castle to the court of the Temple, where the Sanhedrim, or great Council, was held. Their party must have been very strong; for, directly the chief Captain heard of the plot from St. Paul's nephew, he made arrangements for sending St. Paul away with a strong guard at nine o'clock the same night. The word "them," in the twenty-fourth verse, is not in the original. The "beasts" were for St. Paul, and therefore the journey was to be a quick one, and a change of horses was to be provided.

Claudius Lysias's letter to the Roman governor

did not give the true state of the case. He says, he rescued him because he was a Roman : now he did not know he was a Roman until after he had given the order to scourge him.

Antipatris is about thirty-eight miles from Jerusalem : a ruined Roman road still shows the way they went. Cæsarea is about fifty-five miles from Jerusalem.

CHAP. XXIV.

ANANIAS "descended with the elders," means, he came down from Jerusalem to Cæsarea.* Cæsarea was fifty-five miles from Jerusalem, and thirty-five miles north of Joppa. It was a large and beautiful city, built by Herod the king, and took twelve years to build. It was begun twenty-two years before our Lord's birth.

Tertullus was a Roman ; most likely a young lawyer, who, before pleading in the great courts, was trying his skill in the provinces. His speech to Felix began with the grossest flattery, for the

* Jerusalem is a mountain city, some 2000 feet above the sea. Its position is nearly as remarkable as its history ; hence the expressions, *going up* to Jerusalem, and *coming down* from it, so often used in Holy Scripture. The "mount of God," "the holy hill," and many other words of the same kind, become vivid and life-like when we remember its situation.

governor was a very wicked man. He was a freed slave; and, according to histories of that time, joined the heart of a slave to the cruelty of a tyrant. He was mean, covetous, cruel, and luxurious. Tertullus brought three charges against St. Paul—that he was a rebel, a heretic, and a profane person. The Romans had promised to keep the Temple sacred, so that any person profaning or insulting it was punishable by their law. “Nazarene,” was a term of reproach, and the name by which the Christians were called. Tertullus says, “*our law*,” though he was a Roman, because he is speaking for his clients the Jews. He pretends that they were going to judge St. Paul quietly and fairly by their own law, when Lysias came with great violence and took him away. This was not true.

“Thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation.” Felix had been procurator, or governor of Judæa, five, six, or seven years.

St. Paul answers each of the three accusations separately. He says he was not a rebel; for nowhere had they found him stirring up the people: he might be what *they* called a heretic; for he worshipped after “that way,” the way of Christ: but he believed in the law and the prophets, and in the resurrection of the dead. And as for profaning the Temple, after an absence of six years he had returned to Judæa, not only with alms for his

nation, but also with offerings from himself for the service of the Temple. He then asks why those foreign Jews, who accused him, were not present to repeat their accusation.

Felix had more perfect knowledge of "that way;" that is, he knew more about the Christian religion than the Jews who were present. Puzzled by the contradictory statements, he decided to wait until the chief captain should come down.

He therefore put Paul into military custody; that is, kept him chained to soldiers, who relieved one another every watch.

Drusilla, Felix's wife, was a wicked woman. She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I., and had deserted her husband in order to live with Felix. Being a Jewess, she was curious to hear Paul preach. Felix heard him, and was frightened, but would not give up his wicked way of life.

He kept Paul in prison, knowing the Christians to be generous towards each other, and hoping that he should be bribed to release him; and when another governor was sent in his place he left Paul bound, to please the Jews, and to get them to take his part against those who accused him at Rome of avarice, extortion, and other malpractices.

CHAP. XXV.

FESTUS seems to have been a much more just and fair ruler than Felix. He went up to Jerusalem to make acquaintance with the capital of his province, and there the first thing he hears is the complaint of the Jews against Paul. From the third verse, it seems that the forty men who had banded together against Paul had not given up the hopes of killing him.

Festus, however, preferred to give Paul the choice of how he should be tried; and offered, that if he wished it, he should be tried by the Sanhedrim, or great Council of the Jews, and that he himself would be present. Paul knew that there he had no chance of justice, so stood upon his right as a Roman to be judged in the Roman Court. He had already been imprisoned two years at Cæsarea, and during that time great disturbances had taken place. He appealed unto Cæsar, the Roman Emperor. Every Roman had a right to be judged at Rome, and when he had once appealed to the Roman Emperor no person could take the cause out of his hands. No inferior court could either acquit or condemn the prisoner. In very gross cases of crime, such as murder and highway

robbery, when the guilt of a prisoner was known to all, no appeal was allowed.

The king Agrippa here named was Herod Agrippa, the second son of Herod Agrippa I., and grandson of the wicked king Herod, commonly called Herod the Great. He was not king of Judæa, but only king of Chalcis. Bernice was his sister; she was a very beautiful, but very wicked woman. Agrippa was a Jew, and learned in the manners and laws of the Jews. He was Superintendent of the Temple, and had the appointment of the High Priest; so Festus thought he would be more able than himself to examine into Paul's cause, and settle what they should write to the Roman Emperor. The words, "their own superstition," in the nineteenth verse, are not used in a contemptuous sense by Festus, who was speaking to a king whose religion was this very "superstition," but they rather mean "their own *religion*." The word Augustus means "venerable," and was one of the names of the Roman emperors. There was a large military force at Cæsarea, and the chief captains spoken of were the tribunes; officers in command of that force.

CHAP. XXVI.

OUR Lord had told His disciples, "ye shall be brought before kings for my sake," and this prophecy was specially fulfilled in St. Paul. According to his custom, the Apostle begins his defence by describing how strict his former way of life had been, and how willingly he had persecuted the Christians.

The "hope of the promise" was of course the promised Messiah, and *in Him* the promise of the resurrection of the dead. St. Paul asks Agrippa, why this resurrection of the dead should be thought unworthy of belief?

In the tenth verse, it appears that St. Stephen was not the only martyr up to this time, but that many had suffered death for the faith.

The light that St. Paul saw was greater than the brightness of the sun. We shall understand the brightness of that light better when we think of the wonderful brightness of the sun in eastern countries; our own sunshine is as nothing compared with it.

St. Paul does not say he was saved by the Roman soldiers from the fury of the Jews, but by the help of God. How differently a worldly man would have spoken! and what an occasion it would have given him to have flattered the na-

tional pride of Festus, and the feelings of the Roman captains who stood near! But no such thoughts entered the brave Apostle's mind.

Festus heard him patiently for some time; but when he spoke of the resurrection of Christ being able to show light unto the Gentiles, the Roman governor interrupted him, and pretended to think him mad. How could a poor Jew, such as he thought our Blessed Lord, show light unto the great Gentile world—the Roman world, that thought itself so far above all other nations—the Roman world, full of statesmen, poets, philosophers, and men of learning? The idea was, to Festus, simply absurd; and it is still absurd in the eyes of men of the world. Paul answers Festus gravely, and reminds him that the King before whom they both speak believes in the Old Testament Scriptures, which speak of Christ, and that Christ's life and death were known to all men. Then, turning to the King, he asks him to say, with his own mouth, that he believes the Prophets. Agrippa answers with a jest, "Thou wilt soon persuade me to be a Christian!" As much as to say, "Do you think it is to be done so soon?" St. Paul answers gravely, "whether soon or late, I would thou and all with thee were such as I am." They would hear no more; they rose up, but they could find no guilt in him. They looked upon him as a harmless madman. The appeal had

been made, and he could not be set at liberty. They were to send him to Cæsar. How little they knew that this was God's way of sending the Gospel to the great city of Rome, and that they were merely instruments in His hands!

CHAP. XXVII.

THE pronoun "we," shows us that St. Luke accompanied St. Paul on this voyage. Julius the centurion, or captain of a hundred men, seems to have been a man of gentle and kind character. Adramyttium was a seaport of Mysia; it is now called Endramit. They sailed by the coasts of Asia, perhaps to be under shelter of the land, perhaps to lay wait for a ship sailing to Italy. Aristarchus, who was also one of St. Paul's companions, had been with him during the uproar in Ephesus, and during his travels afterwards. At Myra (which was a large city, now in ruins, on a hill near the coast), Julius found what he was looking for, a ship sailing into Italy. This was probably one of the great African corn-ships. They were several days sailing about one hundred and thirty miles, the distance between Myra and Cnydus, which was a large seaport with a fine harbour. The ancient ships had mostly one mast with a great sail, and so they could go very fast when

the wind was in their favour; but were much slower than our ships when the wind was against them.

They "hardly" passed Salmone; that is, they passed it with great difficulty. The harbour called "The Fair Havens" bears the same name now. Lasea was a city about five miles eastward of this harbour. The "master" and the "owner" of the ship were two different people. One had the control of the sailing of the ship, the other the care of the cargo.

The reason "sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was already past," was, that after the fast of the great Day of Atonement, which took place about the beginning of October, the stormy winds arose and the sea was unsafe.

Euroclydon is a north-east wind, and the most violent wind in the Mediterranean Sea. The ship was caught by this wind, and could not sail against it, so they let her go with it. Ancient ships were of the same shape before and behind; they had one enormous sail, and two rudders, one on each quarter. The storm appears to have been so heavy that they got their boat (which had been towing astern) in with the greatest difficulty.

"Undergirding the ship" is now called "frapping." It is binding the ship round with ropes, to prevent the timbers starting or bursting open.

"The quicksands" on which they feared being driven was a large sandy gulf, called Syrtis, on the coast of Africa. The "tackling" of the ship probably means the heavy furniture, and those things that could best be parted with; for it is not likely that they would cast out the ropes which they would want to work the ship with. As neither sun nor stars appeared, they could not judge where they were; for in those days the mariner's compass had not been discovered, and the sun and stars were their only guides.

They had no hope of being saved, for it seemed as if the ship would be beaten to pieces by the waves.

Again, in his extremity the angel of God stands by Paul, and assures him of his safety. He was to declare the truth in Rome, and for his sake the lives of all in the ship were to be saved. The sailors deemed that they drew near to some country, because they heard the breakers—the sea rushing over the rocks. They sounded; that is, they let down a rope with a leaden weight at the end of it to see how deep the water was. They cast four anchors out of the stern, or hinder part of the ship, instead of the bow or fore part, because they were afraid of her drifting round upon the rocks. They wished for the day, in order that they might see where they were.

At Paul's word the soldiers sacrificed the boat ; they had seen the truth of all St. Paul had before told them, and were not disposed to question his wisdom any further. St. Paul, in his exhortation to them to take some food, does not mean that they had not eaten anything at all during fourteen days, but that they had had no regular meals. After their meal they sacrificed the ship's cargo ; it could be of no more use to them now. They then cut away the anchors and loosed the rudders—two large paddles, one on each side, by which the ship was guided—hoisted the great sail, and prepared to run the ship on the shore. They had no boat, so their only chance was to get as near the land as possible. The Roman soldiers answered for their prisoners with their lives ; hence the cruel proposal to kill them, for fear they should escape.

The Centurion spared Paul, little knowing that he himself was spared for Paul's sake.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THE shipwrecked travellers came to land upon a smooth sandy creek in the island of Malta. The spot is still well known, and is called St. Paul's Bay. A small church was built there in very early times.

St. Luke calls the people of the island "barbarous," though they were not by any means uncivilized, nor what we should call savages; but the Greeks, like the Chinese of the present day, called all people barbarians who did not speak their language.

The heat of the fire roused the viper that fixed upon St. Paul's hand. There are no vipers now in Malta, for the woods where they lived are all cut down. In St. Paul's deliverance from the viper, the promise of our Saviour, written in the eighteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter of St. Luke, was fulfilled. Sudden death sometimes followed the bite of a serpent. The title here given, "chief man of the island," is Sub-Prætor, a Roman officer; and this same title has been found cut on ancient stones in Malta. Publius is a Roman name. It is said that he was converted, and afterwards became the first Bishop of Malta.

Fever and dysentery was the complaint of Publius's father. By the healing of the sick, another promise of our Lord was fulfilled, in Mark, xvi. 18.

Castor and Pollux, the sign of the second Alexandrian ship in which they embarked, were favourite gods of seamen, and their images were carried on the prow, and supposed to bring good luck to all on board. Syracuse, the first place

they stopped at, was the capital of an island called Sicily, and about eighty miles from Malta. To "fetch a compass" means to make a circuit—to come round. They probably coasted along Sicily.

Rhegium is a seaport on the south coast of Italy, now called Rheggio. From Rheggio to Puteoli, now called Pozzuoli, it is about 180 miles. They made this voyage in less than two days. At Puteoli they found some Christians, and their stay of seven days with them gave time to the Roman Christians to hear of their arrival and to come and meet them.

Appii Forum is about forty miles from Rome. The Three Taverns is an inn about thirty miles from Rome. Thus it appears that two companies of Christians came out to meet Paul, as far as two different halting-places.

When they came to Rome, St. Paul was given up to the captain of the guard; that is, to the head of the Prætorian guard, the Emperor's own body-guard. Luke and Aristarchus do not seem to have been prisoners, but had accompanied St. Paul out of love. No mention is made of their movements afterwards; we may imagine that they lodged with other Christians, and were at hand to succour St. Paul whenever they were wanted. St. Paul was not put into the common prison, but allowed a lodging of his own; subject,

however, to the condition of being chained to a soldier night and day. According to his usual custom, his first words were to the Jews; and, according to their usual custom, they rejected his words.

“His own hired house” is better translated, “his own hired lodging.” His appeal to Cæsar is said to have been successful: he was set at liberty, and made many missionary journeys, during which he wrote his First Epistle to Timothy and his Epistle to Titus. During his stay in Rome he wrote the Epistles to Philemon, the Colossians, Philippians, and that called the Epistle to the Ephesians, but which is now generally thought to have been written to the Laodiceans. He was released about the year 64. But a persecution broke out shortly afterwards, and in this persecution both St. Paul and St. Peter were put to death by the orders of the wicked Emperor Nero. St. Paul is said to have been taken at Nicopolis, and hence he was sent to Rome; and during this second imprisonment he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy, in which he beseeches him to come to him; in order, it is thought, that he might take leave of him, and be near him at his martyrdom. This Epistle is a most affecting one, as it shows so clearly that the Apostle was expecting his end very soon. He hastens Timothy, and evidently expects to be executed in

the winter. It is thought that he suffered in the summer, sooner than he expected. It is not known whether Timothy arrived in time. That he went to Rome, is probable; that he was imprisoned in Italy, is certain. The Epistle to the Hebrews, though bearing St. Paul's name, was most likely not written by him, but by one of his disciples after his death; and in this Epistle mention is made of Timothy's liberation from prison. We know that the Emperor Nero died almost directly after St. Paul's execution; and the death of this wicked man was most likely the reason Timothy was allowed to go free. St. Peter and St. Paul were both put to death in the year 68. St. Paul, being a Roman citizen, was beheaded; St. Peter was crucified, with his head downwards. From St. Paul's last Epistle, we know that the faithful Luke was still with him.

The after-history of Luke is uncertain: there are traditions of his preaching in Europe, but they are confused and not to be relied upon: he himself, after the imprisonment of his friend, seems not to have cared to record his doings. It is thought that he died a martyr sometime after the year 75.

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